

There's No Place Like [A Medical] Home

Most people have a pretty good idea what to expect when they visit a doctor's office. They check in with the receptionist, take a seat in the waiting area and are eventually seen by a nurse and/or doctor in an exam room equipped with an examination table, a stool, a chair, jars of cotton swabs, tongue depressors, a blood pressure machine, that little flash light for checking ears, nose and throat, instrument trays, etc.

How is this picture of a medical office similar to a Medical Home? What do we mean by a Medical Home?



A Medical Home is an idea developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and supported by federal and state public health programs and other proponents of family-centered, quality health care. The picture of a Medical Home consists of people - professionals and families working together. The foundation of a Medical Home is built on respectful relationships between families and their health care providers. It's a way for families to work in partnership with health care providers to make decisions about their children's health care needs.

Medical Homes are especially important for families of children with special health care needs. A Medical Home ensures that there is at least one health care provider who is informed about and understands a child's special health needs and who understands and respects the family's culture and values concerning those needs. This provider will work with the family, pediatric specialists, childcare providers, teachers, school nurses, coaches, neighbors, friends, insurance companies and others to coordinate any specialty health care and other medical and non-medical services the child may need. These services may include: early intervention, special education, public benefits, and other programs. This type of partnership ensures the child and family is connected with appropriate services. It also avoids duplication of services and can help decrease the need for emergency services because the child's community knows about and is prepared to deal with his or her special health needs.

A Medical Home can be provided by a private practice or by a community clinic in an urban, suburban or rural community. A pediatrician, family practitioner, pediatric specialist, or other primary care provider who knows about the child's special condition and who can also provide typical pediatric care, can create a Medical Home.

Families of children with special health needs can help 'build' a Medical Home for their children. Break ground for your Medical Home by speaking with your child's primary care physician, other specialists, representatives at your managed care organization, customer service representatives at MassHealth (the Massachusetts Medicaid program) and others who make decisions about children's health. Talk about how a Medical Home assures quality, efficient, family-centered care that can lessen the costs of caring for children with special health care needs because it builds a network of people in the community where you live who are prepared to help manage your child's condition.

For more information about Medical Homes, visit www.medicalhomeinfo.org.

Massachusetts Family Voices @ Federation for Children with Special Needs is a state chapter of Family Voices, a national grassroots network of families, friends and professional partners, brought together by a common concern for children with special health needs. Find out more about the Massachusetts Family Voices network by calling 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210 or visiting www.massfamilyvoices.org.